News from Ed Markey

United States Congress **Massachusetts Seventh District**

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CONTACT: Michal Freedhoff
or Israel Klein
(202) 225-2836

MARKEY RELEASES REPORT ON SECURITY GAPS AT NUCLEAR REACTOR SITES

Analysis of regulatory agency correspondence reveals 'troubling black holes in homeland security,' according to the lawmaker

Washington, DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today released a report entitled "Security Gap: A Hard Look At the Soft Spots in Our Civilian Nuclear Reactor Security" that analyzed more than 100 pages of Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) correspondence sent to the Congressman in response to several letters.

"There is little comfort to be found in the agency's response to my questions," said Markey. "Black hole after black hole is described and left unaddressed. Post 9/11, a nuclear safety agency that does not know -- and seems little interested in finding out -- the nationality of nuclear reactor workers or the level of resources being spent on security at these sensitive facilities is not doing its job."

The report indicates that:

- The NRC does not know how many foreign nationals are employed at nuclear reactors, and does not require adequate background checks of nuclear reactor employees that would determine whether an employee was a member of a terrorist organization.
- The NRC does not know what its licensees spend on security or how many security guards are employed at each reactor.
- Twenty-one U.S. nuclear reactors are located within 5 miles of an airport, but 96% of all U.S. reactors were designed without regard for the potential for impact from even a small aircraft.
- Aircraft impact to the containment structure of a nuclear reactor is not the only way an aircraft could cause a full-scale core meltdown.
- The NRC has rejected placing anti-aircraft capabilities at nuclear facilities, even though other countries have chosen to do so and even though many reactors are located very close to airports.
- Spent nuclear fuel in significant quantities exists at reactors all across the U.S. and is stored in buildings that are not hardened structures, some of which reportedly have sheet metal roofs.
- Security of spent nuclear fuel at decommissioned reactors is lower than that at operating reactors in part because licensees obtained exemptions to the security regulations. The NRC has assumed that spent fuel fires would only occur as a result of an accident and failed to consider fires that could occur as a result of a terrorist attack.
- The NRC has not scientifically determined how long spent fuel casks can withstand a continued fire, and has not provided information on worst-case consequences of a breach of a spent fuel cask.
- It took the NRC almost 6 months after 9/11 to require enhanced security at nuclear reactors.
- The NRC has historically failed to adjust the security regulations to meet the evolving threat, and has yet to begin a permanent revision of security regulations following the events of September 11.

- Security exercises at nuclear reactor sites are inadequate, and sites continue to fail the exercises about 50% of the time.

For all correspondence on this issue, please refer to our website, **www.house.gov/markey**.

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